

AC

the Auburn Circle

presents

Annie Armstrong

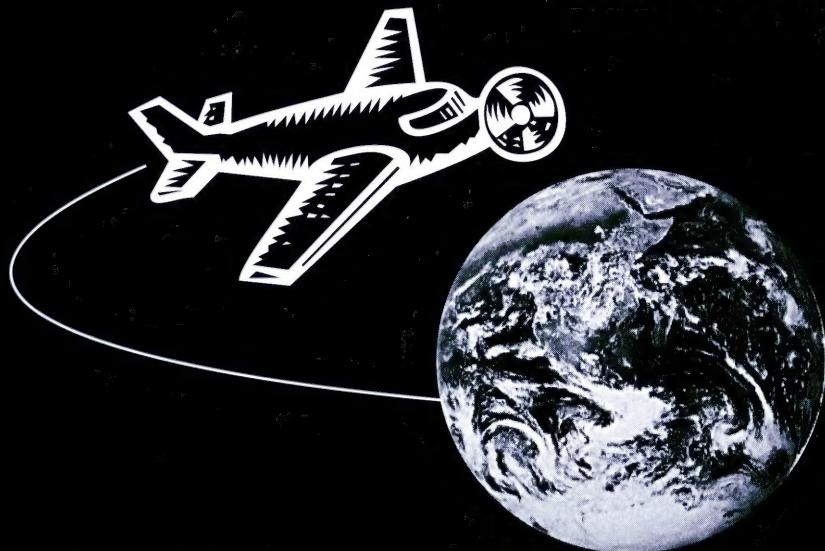
in "Sunflower"



6¢
admission

No children under the age of 1 may enter
the theatre without parental guidance.

TIRED OF THE SAME OLD
SCHEDULE...



HOW ABOUT:

ANTHROPOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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WILDLIFE IN TANZANIA

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auburn circle auburn circle

The **Auburn Circle** accepts works from students, staff and alumni of Auburn University. Prose, poetry, essays and articles should be typed. The **Auburn Circle** has access to IBM and Macintosh computers. It is preferred that artwork be submitted on slide, but originals are accepted. All original artwork remains in The **Auburn Circle** offices and is photographed to reduce risk of damage (all artwork will be returned upon request). We accomodate artwork of any size and shape. Original copies of photographs are required for submission. Collections of related works by artists or photographers are accepted for our Gallery section. All submissions become property of The **Auburn Circle** on a one-time printing basis, with reserved rights for possible reprinting of material at a later date.

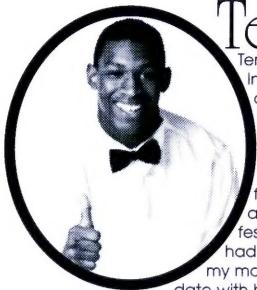
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Publications Suite, Foy Union Bldg.
Auburn University, AL 36849**

Please include your name, phone number, address, and a 2-3 sentence bio with submissions.

The Players

Terence Crowder



Terence Crowder, the suave gentleman in the bow tie, is a Management Information Systems major at Auburn University. He is a Junior. He saw an issue of the Circle and decided to call. "It's something to do and it's just a hobby to me." Terence plays football, middle linebacker, behind Takeo Spikes. He hates practice. He says Terry Bowden talks too much (Smile), but he received most improved player this Spring. Terence is 6'2" tall and is from Carrollton, Georgia. In his spare time he hangs with his "homies." His favorite food... ice cream; any kind of ice cream. His dream is to become successful at anything he puts his mind to (this is his last season and he's trying to go professional). "Truth is the heart of life" is the philosophy that he lives by. And if he had a million dollars, he says, "I would buy a black Lexus Coupe and give half of my money to my mom and dad... then invest the rest." So ladies, if you want a date with him, the key is ice cream, lots of ice cream... and a bus pass.

Fesa Salillas

Fesa Salillas, the cutest thang in the western hemisphere, is a freshman making her exodus from nursing to liberal arts (at the moment). She is seriously interested in going into Theatre or Communications and Broadcasting. Fesa is 5'2" from Birmingham. She digs acting and she is in the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority. The biggest advantage of being in a sorority for her is friendship... and that's just about it. Her favorite food; yes, it is cheese! Outside of loving to talk to Torrence in her spare time, she ponders life and enjoys engaging others in philosophical debates. When asked, What is your philosophy in life, she said, "Honesty is the best policy, and never lie about your cheese." Her biggest dream for the future is to be able to give back to her parents everything they have given her (One of those awesome gifts her parents gave her was a year supply of cheese. Yep). If Fesa had a million dollars she would: 1. She doesn't really have a plan. 2. Go shopping. 3. Buy lots and lots of... yes-- cheese. If you are concerned about hooking up with this one... cheese; she's not a regular cheddar and American cheese girl, either... I'm talking provolone, swiss, head, brie, etc. That's what I'm talking about.



Amy Quarles



Amy "the tough independent opportunist" Quarles is a Junior in English. She is 5'5" and is also from Birmingham. She is "NOT" in a sorority, fellas-- and she hangs out all the time. Her favorite food is key lime pie. She loves it, but admits that it's bad for you. She doesn't have a lot of spare time, but when she can relax, she rides her bike or plays with her dog (that lives about 400 miles away). Amy doesn't have a philosophy in life; she just makes it up as she goes along. Amy dreams that one day she can find an independent benefactor that will fund her traveling and let her spend lots of money... "but I'll probably end up being a teacher." She says if she had a million dollars, she would buy a house in the Northwest and then get a nice car. Next, she'll travel to Greece and save the rest of her money as she pays off her car and college. So, if you fellas like redheads... fork over the credit card-- I should hope you have lots of frequent flyer miles saved up, also.



Ladies and Gentlemen, we are proud to introduce the new Editor of the Auburn Circle, Stephen Shows...



Ladies and Gentlemen, we are proud to introduce the new Design Director of the Auburn Circle, Jaek Amos...



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LOOK HERE!



Editor's Note

My dear, dearest love,

My sweet tranquil Alabama flower, my Auburn, my life, my pride, how can I bear to tell you, how can I ever hope to utter... these words... so hard. But so true. Maybe quickly, maybe not... but not slow, too much pain, you know what I mean, you must, must... it's --

It's over.

There. As plain as can be. The truth. It has been a glorious year. I have given you reason to smile, roamed your corridors, bled my ink for you when I could. Now, well... here we are.

It is an apex. It is an ending. A beginning. There will be others, I promise. See, here is our poetry editor, Stephen Shows, a man to be reckoned with, a man with staying power. His arms are open for you and, unlike me, he won't let go. Here is Jaek Amos, too, who would design the world for you.

But I— I have other designs. The Peace Corps is calling. Africa beckons and I must go. No, I know what you are thinking now and you must swallow back the tears. You knew I wouldn't be here forever.

er—and soon, I promise, you will forget. The memory is a strange, transitory thing. My face, my words, my printed caress—they are strong now, but the kisses will eventually fade; I will recede into the back of your mind, be lost, nameless, a thing of antiquity.

So, please be strong. New memories will replace the old. Whatever happens, the Auburn Circle will remain. Its roots are deep. It is planted in minds, in the bricks of buildings, in the heart of our caged eagle.

We will always have this— this shared history, this remembered world. So, wherever this goes— spreading out in its numerous branches, uncaged— me to the Peace Corps, Torrence to a career in Dallas, J. Russell to his lemonade dreams, the others all asunder and apart and away— We disperse to the many fateful winds and sing: "Farewell to limbs/ To legs and feet/ Goodbye to friends/ We'll never meet/ Again for many years/ Remember that time heals/ All the wounds/ It will be better soon."

And it will. Three months from now, you will return to Auburn and the grieving will be over. You can love again. I promise.

I am yours,

most affectionate,

most humble,

most absent,

DBRC

P.S. If, perchance, you discover after I'm gone that you have been left pregnant with art and creativity, please don't come looking for me. Next year's staff will be perfectly happy to care for your offspring.

by Melissa Roth

Now

For the past fifty years, I woke every morning
to two buds unfurling in the vase at the bedside
a red rose — for passion, he'd say as he kissed
my forehead, and a pink one
for love eternal

I woke that morning
to yesterday's petals
scattered on the table, and
I found his body, crumpled,
among the roses in our garden.

We would work together every day until the sun got too high
stopping, sometimes, to bring lemonade to the
one resting in the lawn chair
He laughed at the way my gloves smudged dirt across my forehead
when I pushed back my hair with my wrist.

Later, in the dark cool of
our house
I'd hold his hand
and wash the dirt from each nail
while he dozed.

Now when I open my eyes
the roses hang heavy
on the bushes he planted
outside my window.

There are no roses in
my house
I don't want to feel their beauty
if he can't
too.

Melissa Roth is a sophomore majoring in English. She has a parrot named Picasso,
who can sing the Redskins' fight song.

by Laura M. Walker

Diamond¹ Chip Earrings

He said
he put the diamond earrings he gave me
in a drawer
under a silk scarf and a photograph
of someone else.

Sometimes I wonder
if he ever opens the box
to see them blink
at him.

They lie at the bottom of the drawer as
if in a deep lake, settled among
the rocks, collecting algae.

They were mine for a week, a Christmas gift;
like tiny twin sparkling badges,
I "earned them,"
he said.
But he muttered that he
"needed to find himself."
I didn't know he was lost.

Somewhere a pair of diamond earrings
lies shup up in a box
burried
in a chest of drawers.

Laura M. Walker is an English major interested in publishing. In her fridge right now she has left-over Chinese food, coffee, and a bottle of wine.

lead brick

by Laura M. Walker

A lead brick
shifts inside me
expanding and contracting
as my memory is prodded:

A stroller in a park,
or a pacifier
abandoned on the
carpet of a store.

My mouth opens
and then shuts
as I try to
tell you
I chose not to meet you.

I chose.

I see other children
run and chase,
dazzling in the
summer sun, or
trudge through
the snow drifts
in January, eager for
the taste of hot chocolate.

I fix two steaming
mugs, loading them
with marshmallows.
I set chocolate chip
cookies on the table
and sit down.
I look for your absent smile.



Z

by Laura K. Dial

The Flashlight

lights up the path
for safety,
to prevent stumbling,
to avoid dangers from the
living things of the night,
things that see in the dark.
As it pans and bounces
over the dew-shining,
bug-jittery ground,
I realize that its
partial revelation is enough
to make me more afraid
of what I cannot
see.

Laura K. Dial is a senior in English who hopes to someday be able to make poetry out of everything, including her phone bill. She plans to graduate in December, and then to enter the Fifth Year program.

A Documentary of Rural Landscapes:



The Creeping of Dusk

Anne Wynn

Gold Hill, Alabama

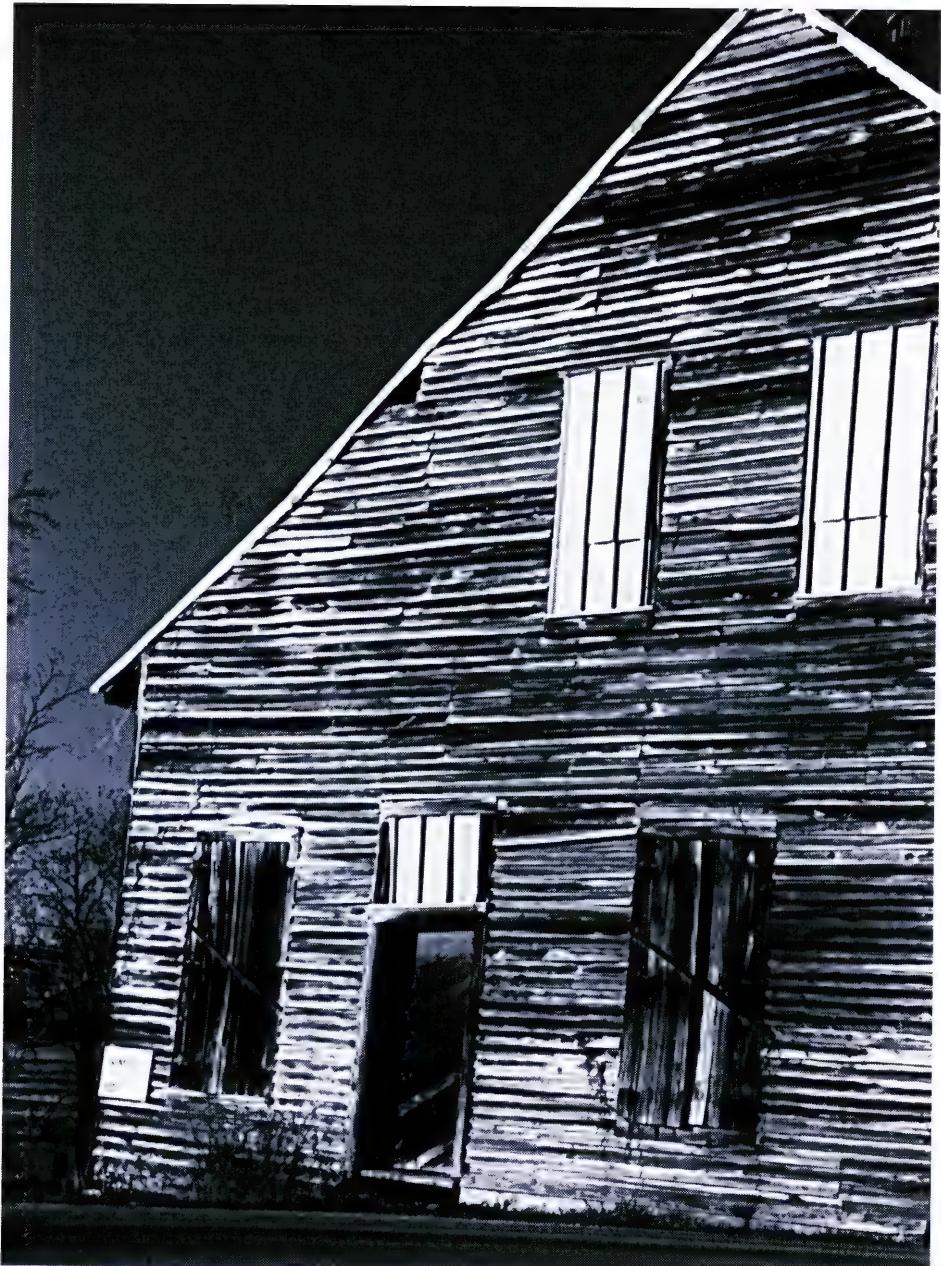
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Anne Wynn is a graduating Geography major from Huntsville. She will be working in California this summer at Donner Memorial State Park. Photography has always been her hobby but she is pursuing a career in Conservation



Documentary of Rural Landscapes: Gold Hill, Alabama #1

Anne Wynn



Documentary of Rural Landscapes: Gold Hill, Alabama #2

Anne Wynn



Documentary of Rural Landscapes: Gold Hill, Alabama #3

Anne Wynn

by Mike Boyd

Poor Graphics

I write on a quadrille pad
and erase the chances for future graphs
Cylinder is exchanged for cynical,
and histogram for epitaph.
Between the spaces designated
for algebraic coordinates,
might be spun a yarn of employer's harm
from shat upon subordinates.

Yes I vomit on a quadrille pad
the acids of reason and clarity,
the crux, the conflict, the intersection
where logic and hope meet hilarity.

When perched upon my checkered pad,
my pen spits curves and radii
that gel in symbols that turn to words.
I'm sorry Pythagoras, but may I?
I do so love the *Nile*, I mean Great Pyramid.

Mike Boyd is a senior in Operations Management. He is a man of little belief. He says that with tongue in cheek. He says "life is like an oil filter-- you can pay now or you will really pay later."

by Katherine Perry

A Portrait of Elly

Even amidst fierce flames the golden lotus can be planted

Maybe a touch of peach would help.

Alone in a bath tub

Her childish smile

*water steaming the mirror
dances on the canvas, like I'm looking at myself,
razors slicing your shins,
maybe some red on her lips*

*A quick note to mom,
or a smaller brush, (I search through the cans)
tea glass of water, bottle of pills*

It's like she's alive, here with me,

*squeeze into the crevice
her eyes remind me of someone I know,
a pill, a sip, pill, sip*

but I can't figure out who it is,
take a nap

maybe it's the paintings I've seen of Mozart,
let it go.

Maybe some white, the palette's full of color,
But they find you,

right there...no...that's not it,
nurse you back to life

that changed her whole...face...
try to shock the hell out of you,

or maybe this is more like her,
but it's no use,

closer to her.
even insulin's temporary.

I'd leave her this way,
Another note,

but this twisted smile
milk by their bedsides,

might hurt my fee.
turn on the gas,

Better to copy the photograph,
towels and tape will hold it in,

Let her mother remember that face.
you need the rest

The woman is perfected.

Ginger's Tales

by Clara Hendon

CHARACTERS:

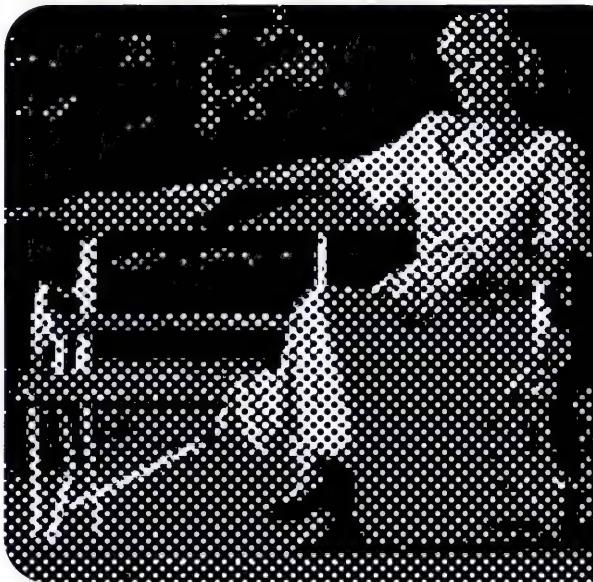
GINGER

PAUL

MAURICE

REGINALD

A DOG



SCENE ONE

It is mid-afternoon. Ginger sits alone in a park with her elbows resting on her knees. She is dressed in plaid walking shorts, an oversized sweatshirt, and a scarf wrapped around her neck three times, we cannot even see her neck, only the scarf. Whenever anyone walks by her, she follows them with her eyes and sighs.

GINGER: Hello everyone (*sighs*)! I am Ginger Goldstein. Spicy name, isn't it? Yeah, I think so. Everyone always said I was a spicy young girl. Oh to be young once more! This park once

was the perfect place for me. I used to walk around here with my friends, whistling, dancing, and singing aloud. Now look at me (pause), I just sit by myself, everyday's the same. Sitting and remembering, remembering and sitting. I don't understand how my life has surely dwindled away to so little as this. Today is my birthday. It should be MY WONDERFUL DAY, damn it! I didn't get a single gift! My mother didn't even call. (shrugs her shoulders) I guess when you turn forty people knock you off the map inside their little brains... pisses me off to think about it. Obviously there must be SOMETHING wrong with me now that I'm older. I haven't even had sex in about five years now. I never thought I'd waste my talent for pleasure. Just twenty years ago this very day I was here. I was celebrating my birthday...a surprise picnic lunch with Paul. Now Paul was a good man, a hard man, a sweet man. He came easy enough, sifted through

my strongest barriers. He kept my attention somewhat, but he was too nice, too tolerating, too predictable. I like a little spontaneity in my life and he was nowhere near spontaneous. Even under the covers I knew everything he was gonna do before he even got started. It was the same...day in, day out. Oh, Paul (sighs)...

Blackout

SCENE TWO

The setting is now twenty years earlier. PAUL is sitting in GINGER'S living room idly flipping through a magazine. He has a bright red package sitting on his lap. He's waiting for her to come downstairs to take her out for her birthday. GINGER enters in a pale blue dress, a light dusting of blush on her cheeks, clear lip gloss.

PAUL: (handing her the package)
Happy birthday, honey. It's not much, but you know how things are right now, no one's coming to see my productions, barely even getting the locals to audition anymore (sigh). Now that the large theatre has opened, no one wants the essence of my little independent place. And everyone swore up and down they

would be around, that they wouldn't let anything take away what I built in this town. Yeah, right! Well, I hope you like it.

GINGER: (smiling) Thank you very much. (sarcastically) I enjoy your little gifts. They are quite often more satisfying than the larger ones. I want to open this later. (in a hurry) May we go now?



PAUL: Of course, love. I have a surprise for you.

GINGER: (falsely excited) Really? I love surprises. Come on, let's go.

GINGER and PAUL depart. The lights go down and rise again. They are now in the park, walking holding hands. He seats her on the bench and motions with his finger for her to wait a second. PAUL exits and returns carrying a picnic basket and a blanket. Her eyes are wide and she stares with a flaming smile. He leans over to her and kisses her long.

GINGER: Paul, let's go to your place (pulling him down on

the bench next to her)!

PAUL: Don't rush it today, babe. Don't you want to finish the picnic (unwrapping her arms from his neck)?

GINGER: Oh, come on, you know you want to! We rarely have private time anymore because you stay so damned busy with that two-bit theatre of yours. And those productions...who the hell's writing for you? Where's the talent there?

PAUL: How can you say that? It isn't a two-bit theatre. Just because it's not big and fancy doesn't mean the work is bad, doesn't mean there's no talent here. You have a lot to learn. You know I'm doing this for us, I have been planning, you know? Do you even care about that?

GINGER: Oh yeah, right! (sarcastically) You're doing this for me, huh? You're doing this for you and your own personal passion. Don't blame it on me. Like I care how well the theatre is doing lately. I am not amused with such matters. That's all you care about. Why can't I do whatever I want to today? It's MY day, MY birthday! But no, you want to waste your time playing Prince Charming in the park. You execute these romantic games, and when I start to get a thrill,

you don't allow me to contribute. You push me away! Why can't I be in control sometimes? It's not fair that I should be put off and have to wait until you're ready! What about when I'm ready for it?

PAUL: I give it to you all the damn time! (He puts his head in his hands.) I might have wanted to wait until later, because JUST MAYBE I'm not through giving you every surprise!

GINGER: Believe me, sex with you isn't too surprising. It never changes and you never do anything for me! Why call that a surprise? Next time why don't you just say, "We can do the 'same old same old' later." That would be more honest.

PAUL: What? (glares at her) Oh just forget it! Here, take your other surprise! (He throws a small black velvet box at her lap.) Keep it, but it doesn't mean a damn thing now, I am through with this!

GINGER: What is this? (opens the box) A ring...an engagement ring?

PAUL: It was.

GINGER: Paul, I can't take this from you. I, I'm just too young to get married to someone.

PAUL: The offer doesn't stand anymore anyway!

GINGER: (disappointed) Oh...well, that's good! I couldn't possibly live with YOU forever.

PAUL: Well, don't worry, because I don't want you now, and I never want to even see you again. You make my skin crawl. 'Bye, Ginger. Have a nice life alone.

Blackout

SCENE THREE

The park. Ginger is staring blankly at the audience.

GINGER: I remember those days. He was my first kiss. He was my first everything. We might've even been married if I had gotten my way that day, if I hadn't knocked on his career and his sexuality. I guess I don't possess his kind of passion. I really do try to embrace the arts, but it took time away from me and I felt insecure with him. I enjoyed him. I enjoyed every-

one. Yeah, there were some on the side, even in my Paul days. Always had fun with someone. Now...(sighs) I don't even think of enjoyment, I cannot even remember what pleasure is, well, pleasure that isn't self-stimulated. Sex...I live without it because I can't get it from anyone anymore. Really, now, who wants to fuck an old woman? I would probably even pay for it if someone was willing to give an old woman a chance. I know that sounds kinda desperate, but I love sex, I miss it. I want it, and I want it good.

Enter MAURICE, a tall, dark, and handsome guy. He struts by GINGER'S bench and flashes her a quick look then turns his head back forward.

GINGER: *(getting up from the bench to catch up with the guy)* Excuse me, young man? I need a favor. It's a big favor.

MAURICE: *(giving her a strange who-the-hell-are-you look)* Yeah? What do you need? I'm in a hurry.

GINGER: Oh, do you really want to know what I need? A birthday present. I need for you to not be in a hurry. I need someone like you. Want to have some fun?

MAURICE: Come on, lady, I ain't into paying for it! Get away from me!

GINGER: You, uh, wouldn't have to pay for it. I'll give it to you for free. Give me a whirl. Don't knock it 'till you try it! I used to be a pretty good time. It's been a while, but I know I haven't lost it!

MAURICE: Look lady, I don't know who you are, or what your goddamn problem is, but why don't you plant your plump ass back over on your bench and flag someone else down to screw around with? I don't have time for this *(walks faster)*.

GINGER: Oh, please, *(drops to her knees)* I'll pay for it. Please, God it's been five years!!!

MAURICE: Hell, no! Get away from me. *(He walks away shaking his head.)* What the hell is this world coming to? I tell you, old ladies begging for sex in Central Park. What kind of recreation would you call that? I swear...

MAURICE exits. GINGER is left alone on her bench once again. She is huffing and puffing and blowing her hair out of her face over and over again.

GINGER: Oh, how embarrassing! I thought he'd at least

consider a free offer. See what I mean? I can't even have a stranger in the park. Must've been a good kid. It's a sad day. It's a sad life.

Blackout

SCENE FOUR

It's a brand new day. Again, GINGER sits on her park bench. She has been there all day. The park is crowded today and there are people walking around. An old man sits down next to her. She looks over at him curiously. He is about sixty-five years old.

GINGER: (sniffing at the old man, quietly to herself) At least he doesn't smell bad. (looking at him) Who are you? Do you come here often?

REGINALD: (raising his eyebrows) My name's Reginald. Yes, I come here every day. I usually sit down over under that tree. What's your name?

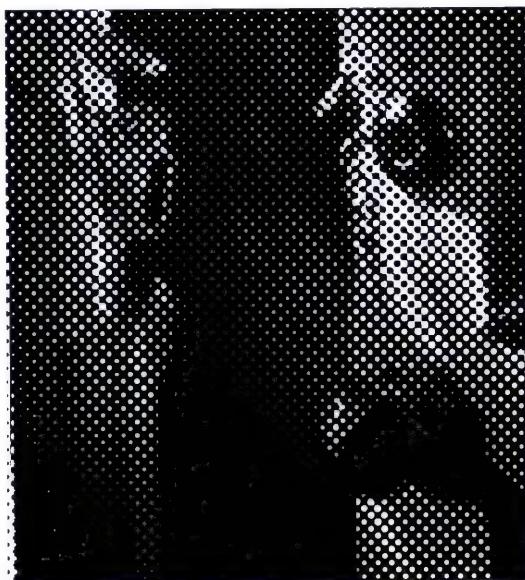
GINGER: My name's Ginger. Ginger Goldstein. I'm Jewish. I come here just about everyday. I like to think about my life...and fantasize about the young men that walk around here. (REGI-

NALD laughs sarcastically) What's so funny, I'm being serious?

REGINALD: Whoa, spicy woman, huh? I don't mean no disrespect.

GINGER: I like to think I'm spicy. The perfect season for any season. Want to find out?

REGINALD: (eyes wide open, stunned) You kidding? (GINGER shakes her



head no) Let's go then little lady. My place or yours? I'd rather go to your place because, well, I'm...a slob, and well, my housekeeper quit and (stalling)... I really don't know if we should do this, and what if (GINGER interrupts)...

GINGER: Your place, just come on.

Blackout

*and dresses herself quickly.
She walks toward the door
and turns to the audience.)
Hell, some people can't live
without it. That old bastard
couldn't live with it!*

SCENE FIVE

Blackout

The next morning. GINGER and REGINALD are in bed. GINGER wakes up. She turns to REGINALD and tries to wake him. He doesn't move. She continues to push on him, rolling him over, trying to bring him from his sleep.

GINGER: Come on, get up!
Let's go to the park. It's a
beautiful day! Sunshine!!!
(Aside) Thank you, God, for last
night.

Reginald, I just want you to
know that I have no regrets. Do
you? I hope not because I think
you enjoyed it as much as I did.
Are you listening to me? Don't
tell me you love 'em and leave
'em!

REGINALD doesn't move. He
isn't breathing. He is dead.

OH MY GOD!!! Why don't you
get up? What have I done?
My first one in five years and I kill
him. It's not my fault. He was
older. I should've been easy on
him. How could I? (She gets up

Later that afternoon. GINGER sits alone in the park, elbows resting on her knees, chin in palms, slightly rocking like a child.

GINGER: (Surprised) I can't
believe what I've done! I
mean, I killed someone. It's
all my fault, I should've taken
it easy on him, let him
lead...let him make the magic
happen. But, no, I chose to
be powerful. I wonder if it
was good for him. I really
enjoyed it. Well, now I know
what I have to do. I've just
got to be good. I've got to
lay off old men. I gotta stray
from sex. It's obvious to me
now that the only way to
have safe sex is to stay away
from it altogether. So, judging
from all the bad experiences
sex has brought me, I vow, in
front of the world, with God
as my witness, to be celibate
for the rest of my life.
(Lightning strikes, thunder rolls)

Enter Maurice.

Uh, did I say celibacy, well, I was only kidding. Excuse me, young man, wanna have some fun? Remember me? Young man?

MAURICE: Get a dog lady, they'll hump anything!

A small dog runs in front of her bench with a leash attached to his neck, but no owner. Runs around and up to Ginger.

GINGER: Come here puppy! Come here baby! (Gives the audience a very sarcastic look) Oh, come on, give me a little credit. I just want to read his tags, he must belong to someone.

Blackout

CURTAIN FALLS



Clara Hendon has been writing since she was ten. Although she works full-time in Engineering, her writing is her "livelihood, ...passion, and... only true love."

by Angela D. Bean

The American Dream

The Barbie doll, Ken-seeking
Melrose Place, Heather Locklear wannabe beauty
Stood, naked, bent over an 18th century
Family heirloom sniffing a line of coke.

You see, she was preparing herself to face a world
of upscale pimps in Armani suits who never left home
without their American Express.

Men who measured success one ... tick ... at ... a ... time ...
Time for the time bomb between Barbie's lace panties
and her perfectly manicured pubic bargaining chip
to explode.

Oh yeah, the stock was rising and all the brokers
were screaming, "Sell!" "Sell!"

Sale on aisle eight Woolworth shoppers
Barbie is going fast, May the highest bidder ...
Batter, Batter, Batter, SWING! Three strikes.
Barbie is out.

Out to lunch at Spago's
eating salad and drinking wine to celebrate
the high-tech transferral of Barbie stock
to its new and rightful owner.

And to think, it's not even noon yet.

Stop the Madness

by Pearlie Harris

I lay, thinking about the way things were, how they could 've been, and how they could be.

Flashback, to contact. Not smoke. Don't choke -the chicken. I'm listenin' to you fishin' -for info. What you don't know is why I'm so -obscure. You try to cure -what's healthy -and fix what isn't broken -'cause I confide , when I could've lied or tried when I should've denied -wanting you. It's true, so unlike you to do the same. You play the game -that players play. Never stay. But love to come my way -to calm down. You clown. And I frown.

I guess that's life right. I mean, we fight, night after night -mare. All a scare, so unaware -that you cause fuss to put a wedge between us, so you won't feel bad when you bust a nut -cracker suite. Ya'll meet while I sleep -away my fears, swallowing my tears. Year after year -long waits and broken dates, yet wondering why I'm late.

Some of this comes from my ignorance. 'Cause I play chance for romance -and wine, as we dine in a fancy restaurant. You taunt me with those lips, I squeeze my hips. And tip -the waiter, hating to say "See you later" -but I do. For fear of having you. - Heard me correctly.

Then it began, the same old plan -to take me for all that's between my legs, but fertilize my eggs -and then I'm stuck -not once but twice. The first was nice, but now I'm on ice -cold 'cause I bought what you sold. 18 years older than my child is living in a house where there's a Hers, but no His.

You think I can't make it. Don't fake it -Asking if I'm doing fine. Still throwing that sorry line -that got you slapped and me trapped. -But I'm okay, graduated last May. Still making my way -to the top. Who knows where I'll Stop -the Madness.

Pearlie Harris . "When I write it may be because I remember what you said, or the way you made me feel. So be careful, you're all prospects for my poetry."



by Torrence Webster

10¢

THE
Adventures of
CUTiE CUTESTER™
COMICS

Hi, I'm Cutie Cutester...



and this is a bottle of milk.



Boy, am I lucky that I hadn't mixed my
vodka in there yet!

Oh, Dear!



Maybe I should submit my
story to the Auburn Circle!
They also take poetry, art,
and photography.

Tee Hee!

Floating

by Amy Weldon



When Lorraine Peters got home from her night shift at Chef Eddie's Grille, her daughter Anita was sitting on the worn flowered couch near the door, smoking a cigarette. Anita's baby daughter Christina was strapped into her carseat on the floor. A weather report was blaring from the TV, and Christina was fussing, but Anita was ignoring both of them. She was wearing a short flowered dress and thick black shoes, ready to go out, as she'd done every night since her husband Michael drowned. Three weeks ago, just after he and Anita had separated, he had fallen off the deck of his fishing boat into Apalachicola Bay. The coroner, who went to mass with Lorraine at St. Andrew's, said there was enough alcohol in him to pickle every fish in the hold.

"I told you not to smoke in here," Lorraine said as she picked up the baby. Anita took a long drag from her cigarette and lifted her purse from the floor. Again, Lorraine saw her daughter detaching herself from her and the baby, leaving as she always did, without saying a word. Lorraine squeezed the baby tighter and snatched frantically at something to say to slow her down. "Where are you going tonight?" she asked. "Don't you want to tell your daughter where you go? Don't you want to show her why her mother likes a bar better than her own house?"

Anita stopped and looked at her mother. Her blank face filled with anger, like rainwater rushing into a barrel. As swiftly as a boxer, she snatched Christina into her arms and grabbed the carseat from the couch. "I think I will," she said angrily as she opened the trailer's door. "And this is not my house. You have no fucking business in my life." She

slammed the door and strode to her little Honda, parked under the live oak tree outside. Something in her purse jingled harshly as she walked away, and the whole trailer seemed to rock on its foundations. Over the weatherman's cheerful voice, Lorraine could hear Christina crying, and then the Honda's engine starting with an angry choke. Anita roared away from the house and veered left on the highway, the screech of tires dying away as she headed toward downtown Apalachicola.

"Thunderstorms tonight over most of western Florida," the weatherman said. His voice sounded far away to Lorraine, standing perfectly still under the creaky ceiling fan. She and Anita had never fought this openly, although a silent tension had been a fact of their lives since Anita was thirteen, as shameful and obvious as periods or bad grades. And since Michael's death, when Anita and the baby had moved in with Lorraine, it had been much worse. Anita's grief lay between them like a wound Lorraine was not allowed to touch, hidden under the fierce filthy bandage of her nights at the bars and her

long silences and the way she looked at her mother and her daughter, as if she'd never seen either of them before.

Lorraine had been expecting this confrontation since the day Anita found out she was the only girl in her class without a father. Lorraine's ex-husband Lee, the captain of a shrimp boat called the Altamira, had left them when Anita was four. It had taken a month for the smell of him to wear away from her hair and her skin, and even longer than that for Anita to stop asking for her daddy. On the day Christina was born, Lorraine had wanted to tell Lee they had a grandchild, but he never came back to Apalachicola anymore. She hadn't seen him in fifteen years.

Lorraine walked onto the small screened porch she'd added on to the trailer last summer and looked out into the night. The thermometer read ninety degrees, normal for Florida in July. She liked to sit out here on nights like these, rocking Christina and listening to fishing boats muttering through the bay. Now she could not stop thinking of the baby in her carseat in a bar on the docks, her gray eyes learning the sight of water men hovering on land and the sad women who tried to hold them there. Once, she'd been one of those women. She remembered the fitful uneasiness that had held her on barstools every weekend, too frightened to stay but too bored to go home, and the broken chain of cigarettes and kisses and boat trips through the darkest parts of the bay, where



the water grabbed the marsh banks with long, clutching fingers.

Anita's restlessness was stronger and stranger than this, especially after Michael's death. She seemed to fly from the house in wider and wider circles, like a seagull with a string tied to its leg. Lorraine had hoped that Anita would go to college, maybe as far as Florida State or the chef school in New York where Eddie had gone, but Anita seemed only to be marking time, living with Lorraine until she got a waitressing job and a room for herself and the baby. Anita was nineteen.

After she had met Michael, she had lived on his fishing boat for a year, traveling up and down the edges of the Gulf. During that whole year, she had called Lorraine once, to tell her she was pregnant. When Anita hung up the phone, Lorraine sat at her kitchen table and cried.

During the year Anita lived on the water, Lorraine had prayed for her and for Michael, the shadow man with an apostle's name. If Jesus had trusted fishermen enough to make them his own, then so should she. And at one time she had. Every night, she had curled next to Lee in the boat's small cabin bed, soothed by the double rhythm of the engine and her husband's heart. On the



boat, she could believe in the balance of wood on water, as she believed in wine becoming blood, and her faith in Lee to keep that balance had been the most natural thing in the world.

Lorraine leaned against the wall of her tiny screened porch and stared at the lights of the power plant across the bay. Lightning flickered in the sky over there; the storm would be here in an hour. She grew angry at her daughter for dragging the baby into her wandering like a leaf into a tide, and then she grew angry at herself. She should have taught Anita not to pin her faith to a man, no matter how

much she had loved him. A man could lift you until your body floated like St. Peter's across the

sea, but when he was gone there was nothing to stop you from falling into that water, and nothing to shield you from its darkness and cold. You could spend years holding your daughter above those waves, praying God to keep your arms from shaking or your footing from shifting, and hoping she would know better than you had. And when it turned out that she didn't, or she wouldn't, you had to let her float away, as Anita was floating now.

Usually Anita went to the bars near the docks or to a friend's house, but sometimes she just drove, without going anywhere. Lorraine had seen the clear greenish sand of Verdigris Beach, more than fifty miles away, on the Honda's floor mats, and on the seat there were sometimes boxes from the Chinese takeout in Panama City. Anita had no reason for going anywhere and no reason to tell Lorraine about it, any more than the tides in the bay had a

reason for being an inch higher one day than another. Surely this was not the way Anita should grieve, fighting off anyone who loved her.

Lorraine turned quickly and walked into the den, grabbing her car keys from the counter. Her old Buick Skylark rested outside like a tired woman on a porch swing, its engine still ticking. She backed slowly into the turnaround and drove away from her house towards town. Spanish moss, hanging from the trees along her driveway, trailed into the top of her headlights and she shivered; it had always reminded her of the hair of a drowning woman, floating like seaweed. She would never understand why tourists loved it so much.

The quickest way to the Boss Oyster, the shrimpers' bar where Anita had once worked and would probably be now, was through a part of town everyone called the Narrows, where rickety shotgun houses huddled on dirty streets. As Lorraine drove carefully past the cars parked along the street, she saw little girls jumping rope under dim porch lights, their feet humming as quickly as fireflies. She hadn't been here since she had stopped driving Anita to her Catholic high school, St. Ignatius, which was on the opposite edge of the Narrows, surrounded by a wrought-iron fence. It was amazing how days and years came and went like tides, their motion unnoticeable unless you stopped to look.

When Anita was little

she had played in her sandbox for hours, building castles with spiky battlements of twigs and rocks. Every night, she told Lorraine drowsy stories about her imaginary friend who played with her in the sandbox, and sometimes she said that her daddy had flown down from the sky to play with them too. Lorraine had been fascinated by her daughter's imagination then, by the unknown life behind the eyes as blue as her own. It thrilled and frightened her, as she was frightened by the liquid movements of her own dreams and by her memories of Lee. Like this child, they had grown out of her own body into independent lives. There was no way for her to control them, to make them go away when she could not sleep or to bring them closer when she was alone.

At thirteen, Anita had become thin and wary. Sharp elbows and small breasts appeared as suddenly and violently as the hibiscus blooms in the yard. Her teachers called Lorraine to ask why Anita never ate lunch, and why she spent study hall hunched over scraps of notebook paper in the library, writing things that she hid as soon as they walked to her table. Lorraine wanted Anita to join the cheerleading squad at St. Ignatius — plump, cheerful girls who shook their pompoms up and down in the sign of the Cross — but when she mentioned it Anita stared at her, went to her room, and slammed the door.

After that, her daughter rode to school in complete silence. In the parking lot, she snatched her bag from the back seat and walked away without looking back. Lorraine knew then that Anita's silence and stubbornness were more than a phase, and had been for longer than she knew. She had stumbled on some deep and unfriendly place in her daughter, a wintry patch of strangeness in a person she thought she knew completely.

At these times, Lorraine was reminded of the last tense months she'd spent in her mother's house. "I could say the sky was blue," her mother had shouted, almost crying, "and you would argue with me." She remembered the anger that lay beneath those years like a poisonous flower, growing only on air but rooting itself deeper every year. Driving through the warm damp night, Lorraine realized Anita had held this anger for years, ready to fight, and the baby was another weapon for her now, as the cigarettes and slammed doors — and even Michael — had been weapons for different battles in the same weary and vaguely shameful war. It had never begun, and it would never really end.

As she passed Chef Eddie's at the intersection of Main Street and Old 98, Lorraine slowed down automatically and scanned the dark windows for the glow of fire in the kitchen. She felt responsible for the restaurant and everyone in it. She kept track of the money that came in and out of the register, and she taught each new girl to walk with her shoulders back and her head up, to carry trays gracefully, and to smile warmly at strangers, as Anita had never done.

Every time Lorraine thought of the businessmen who came to town on company vacations, she was more upset by Anita's refusal to go to college. One particular

group always asked for Lorraine when they came to Eddie's. "Where is that fine-lookin' woman?" they would say in their loud, tipsy voices, and Lorraine would go to the table, ready to take their order and laugh at their jokes. Only once had she been unable to sass them back in the quick way they liked. Last summer, when she had been thinking constantly of Anita, Michael, and the baby on the boat, the men told her they'd hung a photograph of her, Eddie, and themselves in the company men's room. They had laughed, and looked through their laughter at her to see how she would react. "That's just fine," she had said after a second. "I guess y'all need something to look at in there."

The men had laughed with delight and left her a larger tip than usual. As she told them goodbye, her smile felt smaller on her face, and she thought of everything she could have said to them. Why didn't you put it in your office if it means so much? Why is this funny to you? You bastards. But they would have laughed even harder then, as if she'd made another joke. A waitress was a waitress, no matter how many stars came after the restaurant's name. She hated the thought of her face and Eddie's smiling blankly into a cold white Atlanta restroom while men stood underneath the picture to take a piss. Eddie was a man, and it was easier for a man to shake off things like that. A woman had to wear insinuating stares and slow grins and the feel of a hand on her ass like a thick dirty coat, eventually growing so heavy it held her in one place forever.

Lorraine knew about the sad women who stayed in Apalachicola season after season, anchored there by a dim blood memory of water and freedom. Almost every night, after cleaning tourists' rooms or checking groceries, these women came to the Oyster to drink until they could stumble home, alone or with a man. Lorraine hoped her daughter's stubbornness would keep her from a life like that.

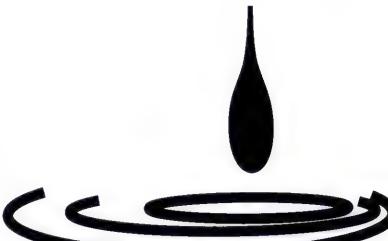
Anita belonged in a place where men didn't hang pictures of waitresses in restrooms, and where daughters didn't tread patiently in the tracks their mothers had worn into the sand.

Lorraine slowed down to make the turnoff onto Main Street. The Oyster was only a block away, next to the docks. All the downtown shops were closed for the day, the windows black behind limp seashell T-shirts and real estate signs. In the weak green glow of the streetlights, Lorraine could see the tiny bookstore, with a few sun-faded copies of a novel that had been new six months ago. She remembered seeing that writer, a tall woman with long red nails, on Oprah. "This is a book about families," the author had said, "about the ways they can hurt each other."

The Oyster was packed tonight, with an Old Milwaukee sign fizzing pink and blue in the window. Pickups and Camaros spilled out of the parking lot into the street, which was barely wide enough for the Buick to slide by. An old Foreigner song — "Urgent," Lorraine

remembered — came through the open door, mixed with the smell of frying oil, cigarettes, and beer, and laughing voices that did not belong to her daughter. "Come here, honey!" she heard a man shout to a waitress. "We gotta get some beer!" More men laughed, their voices rising around Lorraine like a dark tide. She felt sick, and thought about driving on. She had spent too many nights at the Oyster in the past, drinking steadily and thinking about Lee, to go back there again. But she couldn't leave without making sure Anita wasn't there.

As she walked into the bar, the smoky heat hit her in the face, and she felt dizzy. The bar was long and narrow, opening onto the docks at one end, and the ceiling fans spun circles of smoke around the room. In



the corners, she could see the sad women tangled like nets, draped over men who kept one hand on their waists as they talked to other men about catches and boats and tides. At a table next to the door, a plump girl with pink lipstick and blond, dark-rooted hair sat among four men, clinging to one man's arm and playing with the hair on the back of his neck. "Now listen, Johnny," the woman said, "I'm getting bored. You didn't bring me out here just for this?" She giggled and bumped one shoulder against him, like a clumsy cat.

"No, baby," the man said, "I think you know what I brought you for." The other men roared with laughter and the girl blinked, then smiled again, harder. She wasn't much older than Anita, Lorraine saw. As she walked past their table, she could feel the men's eyes, checking out her hips in her dirty waitressing skirt, and she could

feel the woman glaring at her. She was suddenly overcome with exhaustion, and her stomach rolled slowly toward her throat. It wasn't any use explaining to that woman that she didn't want her man, or that she never wanted any man again. A man wanted you to think that you held him by a thread, even though he would never make the effort to leave you. Lorraine never wanted to enter that long, wearying dance again. Nothing but a child was worth hanging onto and protecting like that.

Lorraine walked to the splintered bar and craned her neck up and down until she caught Cindy's eye. Cindy had been a cheerleader at St. Ignatius until she'd gotten pregnant and left school and started working at the Oyster, just as Anita had. She had dyed her hair red to celebrate her promotion from waitress to bartender this spring, and she handled bottles of Bud Light and salty margarita glasses with a prissy skill, wiping marks from the bar as carefully as an old lady dusted her parlor table. A battered sign on the wall behind her said

DRINK TILL SHE'S CUTE.

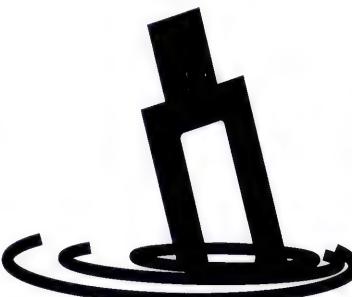
"Cindy," Lorraine said, "have you seen Anita tonight?"

"No," Cindy said. "She's usually here by now." Her head jerked away from Lorraine to a fisherman at the other end of the bar, who was raising a hand to call her.

"Tell her to come back and see me, and to bring that baby." She walked tiredly to the man, lifting her pad from her back pocket to add to his tab. "Aw, honey," he said, "cut me just a little slack, won't you?"

As she turned to leave the bar, Lorraine saw Lee, her old husband, sitting at a table with

three other fishermen. His head was thrown back, and his laughter beat against her ears like a warning siren. For fifteen years, she had kept his picture in her head, and here it was, alive —



the arms thin as rope, hair bleached nearly white by the sun, skin as tanned as an old belt. He was still wearing fishing clothes — an old T-shirt, battered jeans, and flip-flops — and he smelled of salt air over a dark rotten place. A woman sat on his lap, one arm around Lee's neck and one hand on his thigh. As she laughed, her lips stretched painfully over her teeth.

Lorraine's stomach twisted. A white flood of anger burst its sandbagged dam and rushed through her, sinking like rain into her whole body. Below her heart, the seeds of sorrow burst into lightning-colored blooms. She remembered her daughter's sharp elbows and long silences, and the day she had cried by herself when she learned Anita was preg-

nant, and the day Christina was born. Each time her anger had risen, she had held it down. If she didn't stop it, it would jump its banks, slice across the rocky sandbar of what she still called her family, and strand her and Lee on opposite shores forever. And then Anita and the baby would be washed away, pitching and spinning like driftwood in the flood, growing smaller and smaller until she lost them completely.

Lorraine looked across the bar at her old husband and she lost all fear of her rage. Smoke curled like a wreath around his head, and he was smiling. Fire could cleanse a tainted world as thoroughly as water; God had sent rains of fire, and forty days of consuming flood. A fire would heal Anita and the baby and her own heart, burning away the thorns that nailed it in her chest and fusing the three of them together, without the man she could no longer love.

"Lee," she said. "Lee." He turned his head quickly, like a small boy, and she saw that his eyes were so pale they looked white, faded by the years he'd spent in the sun without her. When he saw her, he swallowed hard, reached for a cigarette, and lit it deliberately before

speaking. "This is my ex-wife, y'all," he told the men at the table, who were staring at Lorraine curiously. "I haven't seen her in a while." He gave a short laugh, like the bark of a seal. The woman on his lap drew her lips together over her teeth in a quick suppressed snarl.

"You have a granddaughter now," Lorraine said. "I thought you'd want to know."

"My baby got married?" he said, turning to the other men and smiling, signaling them to smile too. "How old is she now, sixteen, seventeen? Ain't that a little young?"

"She's nineteen," Lorraine said. "You left us when she was four, remember?"

"Who'd she marry?" he asked. When Lee was nervous, Lorraine remembered, he would spin the wheel of a conversation abruptly to the right, as if he were steering his boat away from a sandbar. She still knew him too well; he still took up a space in her mind. He would always be there, drifting through her recklessly, with no compass and no warning, no matter how often she tried to push him away. Suddenly she felt dizzy and tired, floating uncertainly in the brackish water where past became present. The fire settled into her chest, and the lifeline of her anger slipped slowly through her hands.

"She never got married," Lorraine said. "Christina's father drowned last month. She and Anita live with me."

"That's a damn shame," Lee said. "I should stop by and see her before I leave again."

"Yes, you should," Lorraine said. "But it's too late." Her voice was a tinny, distant whine, as useless as a mosquito's hum. The smell of Lee's fishing clothes, the smell of all their time together on the boat, was seeping onto her again, after she had worked so hard to take it away. She was too close to him, and too tired to see him clearly, and the easiest thing to do would be to slip under this tide. She

wanted to let go of the ropes she'd used to hold herself up alone for so long, and float gently down into this cushion of smoke and noise and memory, drowning in a long, sleepy spiral.

But she had to find her daughter. "Don't bother her," she told Lee. "She's doing fine. We all are." With an effort, she turned and walked away from the table. Cindy looked at her curiously from behind the bar. She could sense Lee behind her, gathering himself to laugh again, but it didn't matter. The dark hole of the open door moved back and forth in front of her, and then she was outside, spinning slowly into the night. Thunder crackled like ripping cloth over her head, and cool winds burst against her face.

Lorraine stuck her key into the Buick's door, then grabbed the handle as she leaned down and threw up onto the cracked asphalt of the parking lot. Her stomach clutched itself painfully, like a fist, and her nose and mouth stung with tears. She wondered, slowly, what was happening to her. The whole world had turned upside down and left her standing in a place she'd never been before, without Lee and without her daughter, dizzy and sick, no longer sure of anything.

She climbed painfully behind the wheel of her car and cranked the

window down, breathing deeply. As she started the engine, she could smell the thick salt air of the marshes, so far away they already felt like a memory. She remembered cruising up and down the channels of the swamp in Lee's boat, facing the wind and gulping mouthfuls of this air like holy wine. Slowly, she eased the Buick out of the parking lot and drove toward home.

Lorraine felt tired and emptied out now, drained of worry and anger. The gathering wind pulled her hair through the window, tugging and braiding it as gently as a mother's hands. Her head cleared slowly, and her arms rested on the steering wheel as light as angel's wings, as if the rest of her body had been left behind. Where the boiling reservoir of her anger had been, there was only a blank desert crater. Where the photograph of Lee had been, there was only an empty sizzling hole, its edges burning like the ring of fire around an eclipse of the sun. Knives of lightning stabbed the sky, and thunder followed, half a step behind and getting closer.

Lorraine passed the small white chapel of St. Andrew's, where she attended Sunday mass. Anita had taken her first Communion there. Suddenly she circled the Buick through the middle of the empty street and came back to it. She wanted to be there now, for a reason she couldn't name. St. Andrew's doors never closed, even though some people in the congregation said the church was a natural target for thieves, sitting far back among the dark pines behind the town cemetery. Lorraine had never believed that anyone would dare to steal from a church. There were enough warnings in the Bible about that — against people who would take the silver chalices or purple Lenten vestments from the sacristy, people who would use a church as a bank or a gambling hall, or anybody who would come there for the wrong reasons.

Thunder crackled behind Lorraine as she got out of her car and walked toward the double doors at the front of the church. One of the doors was open, and a faint uncertain light was beating like a moth against the win-

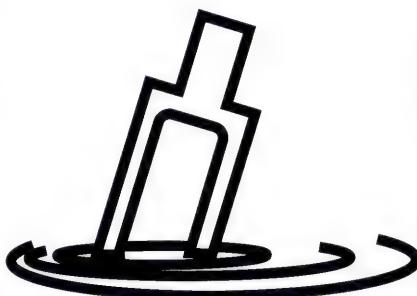
dows. As she looked inside, she saw that someone was already in the sanctuary, huddled next to the altar. It was so dark she couldn't tell who it was, although the thick white candle Father Montjoy kept behind the altar was burning on the rail, guttering and smoking like a torch. The flame was larger than Lorraine had ever seen it grow during a service, larger than any candle she'd ever seen. Shadows and rings of light flickered across the ceiling and the silent pews, moving like waves, as if the whole church were underwater.

Lorraine stepped hesitantly across the threshold, and then she saw that the person kneeling at the altar was her daughter. Anita was drawing her rosary beads slowly through her hands, one by one, and they slid and clicked against her fingers as softly as a crowd of angels whispering. Christina's carseat was sitting on the floor a few feet away. Anita's head was bowed, and her face was completely hidden.

Lorraine realized the mystery of her

daughter then, as she never had. She remembered trying to awaken Anita from childhood dreams or nightmares, reaching with both hands into the bodiless world of her daughter's mind to save her from everything she feared, and bring her back into her own bed, in her mother's house, in her mother's arms. But even when she finally woke up, Anita had not come back to her. Even as she had clung to Lorraine with her whole body, she had stared past her at something else even worse. Lorraine had wondered then why her daughter refused her comforting. Now she realized that there was a limit to the comfort she could give, a limit defined by the boundaries of Anita's own world. She had never acknowledged them as Anita slid away into her own life as a mother, and she had never realized that knowing these boundaries did not deny her the chance to love her daughter, around and over and beneath them. For the first time, she looked upon her daughter's whole and distant life, and saw the helpless, foreign hunger of another woman's grief. Even Lee had never been this far from her, or as close.

Carefully, Lorraine walked down the aisle toward the altar where Anita huddled. Her shadow leaped into the arches of the ceiling, larger and more



solid than she herself had ever felt or hoped to be. Lightning jumped in the sky outside, and the silent, joyful sound of rain drifted through the open door. From her carseat on the floor, Christina chuckled quietly. Anita turned and looked up, directly into her mother's face.

Ningyo

by Katherine Perry

Sometimes
when we make
the thunder at midnight,
with his grunting body
pushing in waves,
I question this wifehood:
clean the porcelain,
pour the tea.

Like a carp in a tiny pool
surrounded by pruned
gardens,
I swim circles
to lay eggs,
to offer my flesh
for sushi.
Submerged, yet
yearning for air,
I watch him on the land:
work his days,
stop for *sake*
where bar girls praise
his manhood,
and leave me only red-faced
leftovers.

But I continue:
warm his bath, feed his daughter,
keep her perfect, a doll,
for his eyes.
She is my dream,
my flight from water,
I wait for the day
when she soars down open beaches
and laughs at me
still swimming.



Study in oil

C.N.

C.N. is a senior in fine art.

Break you

by Valerie Merritt

The sudden rapture pulls me into a stare
of pure utopia.
The weight of the monster has been driven from
my heart.
The chains have burst- the links scatter
The heavy pull is absent...
Burning sensations calm my desires-

I don't want to be the anvil in your heart.
I don't want to be the open flower glancing over
the concrete- where you let nothing grow.

Let my perfume spread across your hard ground...
Let me plant my stem... into one of your cracks...
Let me break you-

Valerie Merritt was brought up on a small island thirty miles long by eight miles wide, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Its name is Guam. She is currently a freshman at Auburn University with a goal of obtaining a major in international business. She enjoys the finer things in life and is in love with dolphins.

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